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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

25 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: The Spanish Base Issue

1. The Franco regime probably would abide by a five-year renewal of the US-Spanish defense agreement. This agreement is especially valued by the powerful Spanish military establishment for the equipment, training, and international tie it provides them. Moreover, the very visible link with Washington still is psychologically important to the regime as the best available substitute for acceptance by the other West European powers. These attitudes are changing, for reasons discussed below. But the change is not likely to produce a sharp reversal of government policy within five years.

2. Should Franco die or become incapacitated during this period, the situation would of course become more complicated. Initially, the factions which comprise the present regime -- the military, the Church hierarchy, business leaders --

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

probably would cooperate to ensure an orderly transfer of power, and the military would continue to be the strongest single element of the government. Soon after the initial transition was achieved, however, there would likely emerge a struggle for power among groups and individuals who now are united in support of Franco but have a long history of distrust and even hatred of each other and who certainly would fall out over the pace of change necessary or desirable in post-Franco Spain.*

3. In the resulting atmosphere of government uncertainty and weakness, groups which oppose the regime -- dissenting workers and students, liberal Churchmen, and the illegal political parties -- would become bolder and more violent in their attacks on the government. We do not think these attacks would result in an overthrow of the government by more liberal forces. It is more likely that widespread civil disorders would be the one thing which could at least temporarily unify the feuding "in" groups in support of a more authoritarian regime. It is possible that the leaders of such a

* See NIE 27.1-68, dated 10 October 1968, for a fuller discussion of the groups and issues likely to be involved in a post-Franco power struggle.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

regime, feeling weaker and less confident than Franco, would react to criticism of their actions by the US and other democracies by kicking out the American military. But it is much more likely that they would cling ever more closely to the practical military benefits which the US defense link confers.

4. When and if, through evolution or revolution, more progressive Spaniards should come to power, they are likely to look to Western Europe for guidance and for material support. The illegal Socialist, Christian Democratic, and Communist political groups -- and their various worker affiliates -- already receive some training and support from their brother organizations in Western Europe. A Spanish government dominated by liberal groups would probably be bitter about Washington's military and economic aid to the Franco regime. But it probably would also want to be part of whatever alliance then existed among the other West European governments or between them and the US.

5. While the outlook for keeping the bases another five years seems good, the general condition of US-Spanish relations probably will deteriorate. Growing economic prosperity and increased contacts with Western Europe already have

- 3 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

lessened the Spaniards' sense of isolation and thus of dependence on the US. In this atmosphere, new expression is being given to anti-American sentiments which go all the way back to a long standing grudge against the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who allegedly stole Spain's Empire and blackened her international reputation.

6. In order to diversify its foreign associations, Madrid recently has been more active in trying to improve relations with and expand markets in the Arab world, Latin America, and even Eastern Europe. Some Spanish officials may hope that emulating de Gaulle's attitude toward the US would increase Spain's appeal in these areas. Few would be willing to carry this line of reasoning to the point of cutting ties with the US. But the Spaniards will want to be seen as guarding against any possible contribution US bases on Spanish soil might make to policies not approved by Spain -- e.g., US support of Israel against the Arabs or Britain's "occupation" of Gibraltar.

7. A continued US military presence in Spain would make it almost certain that contending political groups would try to draw the US into a post-Franco power struggle. A renewed

- 4 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

base agreement would increase the bitterness of opposition groups and even some within the regime over Washington's apparent support of the Spanish military. If Washington tried to inhibit the Spanish military from using US-provided equipment against its domestic opponents, then the US would be accused by the military of being soft on their "Communist" challengers. In this way, internal turmoil could pose political problems as well as a threat to the effective operation of US base facilities.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



ABBOT SMITH
Chairman

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- 5 -

S-E-C-R-E-T